



Kirins: The Seer of Serone

James Priest

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Kirins: The Seer of Serone is a whimsical fantasy novel about the power of friendship and tradition.

James Priest's charming fantasy novel *Kirins: The Seer of Serone* depicts a resilient magical race grappling with the unforgiving world of humans.

The kirin are humanoid magical creatures, standing one foot tall, who live in communes in vast natural areas of the earth. A spell broadcast from their capital keeps them invisible to humans—until a troublemaker disrupts it. One kirin, Till, is spotted by a human, whom he then befriends, going counter to the kirin philosophy of leaving humans alone due to how unpredictable and dangerous they can be.

Till's human friend keeps his existence a secret, but other humans discover Till anyway. Bailey, the captain of a fishing boat in Alaska, kidnaps Till and forces him to use his magic to draw fish into his nets. Other kirin learn of Till's capture, and they mount a daring rescue, but complications arise, such that a grand council of kirin wizards and leaders convenes to decide the fates of meddling humans and kirin alike.

The elder kirin magician Speckarin tells much of the story, and while he ponders the many wonders he encounters (some kirin ride otters, while others ride ravens), he does not partake in the most adventurous parts of the quest, nor is he developed beyond his role as a narrator. Selfish and evil Bailey, when he becomes subject to kirin magic, learns to repent and befriend kirin rather than enslave them; he is the only character who displays much depth or change. While the stakes are sometimes high, there is little real tension in the story, whose humans are either all good or all bad, with little middle ground.

Kirin societies and languages differ throughout the world, revealing detailed worldbuilding in the story's background. Despite their linguistic differences, though, the characters speak with the same tone and cadence. Even villainous Bailey speaks in direct, measured language. The worldbuilding is at its most underexplored when it comes to the world's magic; Speckarin is a magician, yet knows little magic himself. Some characters have telepathic powers; others do not. The distinction between the wizards and the magicians is not clarified.

The Seer of Serone enters the story late, and is present to judge Bailey for his crimes against kirins. As an all-knowing wizard, she is both mysterious and powerful. But her presence removes any remaining tension from the story: it seems that nothing can go wrong under her watchful eye. She excels at kindness, giving Bailey a chance to redeem himself by transforming into a better person; this results in an uplifting resolution to the suspense-light tale.

Kirins: The Seer of Serone is a whimsical fantasy novel about the power of friendship and tradition, uniting humans and fantastical creatures in their quests and pursuit of happiness and wisdom.

JEANA JORGENSEN (December 3, 2021)

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